

1 Introduction: Migration and Development from a Governmentality Framework

Across the world, year after year, several hundred thousand migrants participate in seasonal agricultural migration programmes, about 600,000 of them temporarily travelling to OECD countries. This increases migrants' reliance on foreign income as well as that of high-income countries on agricultural workers from middle- and low-income countries. Temporary migration for work is not a new phenomenon. Nonetheless, there has been a change in paradigm from the post-World War II guest worker programmes to the current ones. In parallel to the international 2000s' debate regarding the so-called migration-development nexus, a new generation of circular migration programmes was developed, so that by the mid-2000s, almost all OECD countries had them in place (OECD, 2008). This resurgence of temporary migration programmes was justified as a way of preventing irregular migration and security incidents, under the assumption that the promotion of regulated options would discourage the use of non-regulated channels for migration.

Governments in the Pacific region have consistently expressed their interest in migration and development, as over the last six decades citizens have moved in various ways between their home countries and the more developed economies of New Zealand and Australia. In the early pre- and post-independent Pacific period, colonial processes still heavily influenced forms of mobility. Migration for work and education was encouraged in the Pacific, as education systems were nascent and there were limited employment opportunities. Despite significant investment in education systems in the Pacific, decades later, migration for education and work continues. Many Pacific countries government leaders are educated in New Zealand and Australia. Expectations that future leaders require education abroad remain, and intergenerational aspirations for better prospects prevail.

Over this same time, many Pacific citizens took different opportunities to travel and live in the wealthier countries in the Pacific and beyond, where they could earn higher incomes. Employed mostly as semi-skilled workers, their steady remittances are welcome in their home countries, even as the prospect of them returning becomes an increasingly distant plan. In the last decade and a half, another flow of Pacific citizens has emerged, those who have the opportunity to undertake short term, seasonal agricultural work, in New Zealand and Australia, from where they remit or return home with significant resources. This change in migration patterns is the manifestation of a global shift in development policy, by which migration is seen as essential for economic growth in both sending and receiving countries. In the Pacific region, these transnational flows are named labour mobility, a denomination which signals the spatial mobility of workers and their labour as a production factor.

Pacific people move to and from New Zealand and Australia in this and various other ways, yet the predominant analytical approach used in migration and development literature, and especially in development economics, is that of push-pull theories. An alternative way to make sense of the contemporary dynamics of Pacific mobility is to situate contemporary practices, in a historical trajectory that makes explicit connections to colonial practices of governing and managing people in the Pacific. The rationalities, strategies, and day-to-day practices engendered by a particular migration management policy, the Recognised Seasonal Employer's (RSE) scheme, are analysed from a relational approach using a governmentality framework and with insights from fieldwork in New Zealand and Vanuatu. A broader timeframe is provided to understand the intransigence generated by entangled colonial power relations, how they collide and merge with traditional – customary – worldviews, and how these ensure the continuation of the RSE scheme. Due to the negligible international migration Vanuatu had before the scheme became available (Hayes, 2010), this case study, facilitates analysing how the rationale of development influences ni-Vanuatu engagement with the scheme. Nonetheless, similarities can be found with other Pacific participants and temporary migrant workers elsewhere.

Drawing on the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, as appropriated by Rose (1999, 2000), Lemke (2001, 2007, 2011), and Geiger and Pécoud (2010), allows to explain how the rationale of attending to the welfare of populations through development narratives, underpins the promotion of seasonal labour migration, and particularly, the RSE scheme portrayal as a development programme. By examining the power differences in a range of social relations, among persons and institutions, an explicit relational approach to understanding the persistence of transnational flows is unfolded. Governmentality, as a relational approach, acknowledges that individuals stand in a range of relational positions, which are produced by historical experiences with others, peers, authority figures, and more formal institutions. Relations are dynamic, as individual and group behaviours are transformed through a variety of instruments. These instruments or governmental technologies, versions of which have governed Pacific mobility over time, are produced by certain modes of problematisation. The linkages among unemployment, the potential for insecurity, and the dependency of Pacific countries on external aid – common problematics ascribed to the region – transform ni-Vanuatu participants and their communities through their engagement in the RSE scheme.

Against this backdrop, these concepts and their application are examined using different scales of analysis. In the Introduction, the coupling of migration and development in policy-making within the management of temporary migration is explained, outlining the global trajectory of migration management and its governance to describe its underpinnings; including the 'triple win' narrative

ascribed to it. This section develops key concepts behind the governmentality framework, the rationale for the focus on Vanuatu as a case study and the methods used. In the second section, after providing a brief historical overview of labour mobility in the Pacific region and the context that led to the uptake of the RSE scheme, a regional scale of analysis draws attention to the roles of different actors and to how the lack of labour in New Zealand's agricultural sector and of waged employment in Pacific countries were articulated to respond to governments' and private sector needs. That section concludes setting the framework for the new social relations established by the operationalisation of the RSE scheme and its coupling of labour mobility with development narratives.

The third section explains the different features of the RSE scheme using a governmentality framework. This understanding of how the social and political context of temporary transnational migration is produced by power relations is linked to the pre and post-colonial history of New Zealand and other countries in the South Pacific. The focus is on particular governmentality techniques used by epistemic communities driving the implementation of the RSE scheme, which are based on long-standing relations between Pacific countries and New Zealand. While this analysis focuses on the conceptualisation of the problems at a policy level, the fourth section delves into the lived experiences of RSE participants. By bringing attention to an individual scale, the transformations in the participants' subjectivities are evidenced, analysing how individuals have become RSE workers after complex negotiations with themselves and with the managers of labour mobility. Finally, the conclusions argue that the RSE scheme is symptomatic of the widely accepted development model for Pacific countries and their purported transition from semi-subsistence, non-capitalistic economies to neoliberal states. Widely shared problematisations and solutions conceptualise poverty and unemployment as a predicament of individuals, made responsible to solve them, sometimes capitalising on their own cultural values to become productive subjects.

1.1 The International Governance of Migration Management

Migration management conceptualises migration as a human phenomenon but at the same time problematises irregular migration. Workers, who are the cornerstone of migration management, are made responsible for achieving their own development by becoming a productive migrant/labour unit in the recipient economies. Beyond economic development and capital accumulation, migrants are also expected to enhance their human capital. Thus, the different mechanisms that migration management invokes to regulate the movement of people across borders, are used as tools against the lack of development in sending countries, and are expected to revert, at least to some extent, some of the conditions that

initially motivated migration, such as poverty or unemployment. In this way, the developmental state (Adamson, Tsourapas, 2020) transforms individuals, institutions, and governments. Development becomes part of an apparatus of global governance aimed at managing risks and governing unruly populations (de Vries, 2007) through a range of governmental technologies including the securitisation of unstable areas, imagined as spaces of breakdown and in need of re-ordering (Duffield, 2001). Securitisation against sociocultural backwardness problematises the circulation of certain ‘cultural types’ in receiving countries (Duffield, 2006). Therefore, migration management signals the emergence of interconnected policy agendas related to migration, development, and security.

Demographic profiles are the main criteria used for the management of temporary migration. The surplus of working aged people in one country is linked to the deficit of workers in another. In economic terms, seasonal migration responds to the imperatives of sending and receiving countries, in ways that do not threaten local unskilled workers (Kalm, 2010). In practice, insights derived from the data produced through the management of migration programmes, are used to incrementally redefine and resolve problems, such as unemployment, cost of remittances, lack of entrepreneurial skills, among others. This signals that problematisation is not static but allows for the adjustment of concepts and objects’ definitions. Once a new problem is identified, a new solution follows, as it is always assumed that situations can be more efficiently managed, giving way to an eternal optimism to manage problems (Miller, Rose, 2008). This speaks to the appetite to identify successes and failures of existing policies through periodic evaluations, a salient characteristic of the new public management approach at the core of migration management. It follows that migration can benefit all actors involved if experts’ recommendations are fulfilled, as a given reality is considered programmable. Experts’ knowledge is presented as technical and ‘apolitical’ and often intentionally using broad terms and definitions that allow for the discretion of government officials and other stakeholders responsible for course correction.

Across receiving countries and in alignment with the new public management agenda, by which the public sector is encouraged to develop a manager–client relationship with its citizens; migration management implies the enactment of a business-like model. Public policies are based on estimations of costs and benefits which target efficiency improvements through the appropriation of private sector management models. The adoption of migration management, with its ‘diffuse technocratic and economic notions’ (Georgi, 2010, 56) such as ‘best practices’ or ‘improved standards of living’, was also influenced by the numerous publications promoting the application of managerial logic to different aspects of life. Since the 1980s, this pervading managerial mindset, has led to

individual subjectivation processes based on concepts such as employability, for which self-management is paramount (Boltanski, Chiapello, 2005). New public management is also tied to the growth of the migration industry and the involvement of private actors in migration reflects the advance of neoliberalism (Menz, 2013). In this drive for privatisation, employers or private agents through outsourcing are tasked with controlling compliance with migration status, determining workers' eligibility, etc. This does not necessarily mean that the state relinquishes its responsibilities over migration, but that another layer of management is added.

The International Organisation of Migration (IOM) brought the new public management approach to the political arena (Georgi, 2010). In the 2000s, an international migration regime was outlined by the New International Regime for Orderly Movements of People (NIROMP) project (GCIM, 2005; Ghosh, 2000), which considered migration could be coherently managed based primarily on economic criteria. Thus aiming to maximise benefits and reduce costs, while at the same time controlling migration flows from a 'neutral', bureaucratic, and depoliticised standpoint. This means conflicting or sensitive issues such as restricting workers to a single employer, or extending employers' supervisory role to make them responsible for enforcing migration policies, in an attempt to use fewer government resources, can be excluded or overlooked, as implemented measures are portrayed as technical.

Similarly, the Global Forum on Migration and Development launched in 2007 and the United Nations High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development fuelled renewed international interest in the topic (Bedford, R., et al., 2017). New Zealand and almost all OECD countries had established temporary migration programmes by the mid-2000s (OECD, 2008).¹ This new generation of circular migration schemes, implied a paradigmatic shift due to the assumption that the promotion of regulated options would deter the use of non-regulated channels, thus justifying migration management as a way of preventing irregular migration and security incidents. The inclusion of migration in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, and the launch of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in 2018,² consolidated and formalised the link between migration and development in international policy-making circles, with a variety of agents operating between and beyond national borders. Nonetheless, the link between

¹ See Dun et al. (2023) for a recent review of contemporary managed migration programmes with an agricultural focus/component.

² Pacific countries participating in the RSE scheme and New Zealand have adopted the GCM. However, only Fiji has signed the United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

migration and development had already become increasingly visible since the 1990s, with remittances at the core of the ‘development mantra’ (Kapur, 2004). Around the same time, discussions of a ‘global migration crisis’ in international circles pointed to ineffective and incoherent policies having the potential to create crises (Weiner, 1995). Thus, norms and regulations were deemed essential to improve migration governance.

Under migration management, governments prioritise cost-effective migration policies and divert attention from migration issues that may be deemed controversial. Similarly, the uptake of new public management implied institutional and ideological changes in relation to cost shifting and blame avoidance (Menz, 2011, 2013), placing the financial burden and responsibility in cases of non-compliance or accidents on private actors, including employers and service providers. This pragmatic approach to migration blurs responsibilities between state and private actors. Presenting the management of migration as a technical problem requires the identification of policies and good or best practices to find ‘what works’. This paradigmatic change led to the systematisation of mechanisms for managing migration which disavow migrant social relations and can curtail freedoms and rights in favour of demonstrating the effectiveness of migration programmes.

1.2 A Governmentality Framework and Neoliberalism

Governmentality is concerned with the ways of thinking and acting involved in governing for the benefit of populations’ wealth, health, and happiness (Rose, Miller, 2010). Deciding what is considered beneficial for a population entails a political aspect beyond the apparent neutrality of the means of governing, prompting a process by which problems are made visible. Such a political process can be difficult to trace, given that problems appear in different places and times and for a variety of actors. Agents such as academic scholars, thematic experts, and government officials, can help decision-makers define problems, becoming part of an epistemic community. This problematisation suggests that problems are not waiting to be revealed, but instead need to be constructed (Miller, Rose, 2008) using specific forms of reasoning to understand reality, called rationalities.

The articulation of rationalities leads to an agreement about what the problems are. Problems are then framed using a common language – a narrative – which is distilled from policies and official discourses to quotidian interactions, allowing knowledge to be formalised, and enabling decision-makers to set measures to rectify said problems. From a state standpoint, governmentality techniques propose practicable interventions to remedy conducts that are deemed unproductive or inefficient. Thus, solutions to specific problematisations are put into practice by

means of strategies, tactics and government programmes which range from ‘governing the self’ to ‘governing others’ (Lemke, 2007). These techniques are not concerned with legal subjects but with empirical quantities (Foucault, 2001), meaning not with citizens, but with populations. Population as data is the objective of governmental technologies and the political economy is the science and the technique for government intervention in the economy (Foucault, 1991). In this way, governing the conduct of the population couples economic and political imperatives through intervening in the complex relations populations have, not only with material resources, but also with different actors and their ways of thinking and acting.

Statistics are a classic example of a governmental technique, highly valued for policy-making because they facilitate decision-making. Statistics also reveal that ‘through its movements, its customs, and its activity, population has specific economic effects’ (Foucault, 2007). However, numbers and statistical data hide personal experiences, which are hard to quantify, and the subjects behind statistical figures can be instrumentalised to drive economic growth, becoming contingent on economic conditions. Under neoliberalism, the individual ‘being himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of his earnings and entrepreneur of himself’ (Foucault, 2008, 226), implies recognising individuals as labour units. This labour can then be broken down into income and skills, whereby personal skills determine where individuals would be able to work.

Foucauldian inspired studies on migration have mostly focused on the analysis of security and disciplining techniques. Security techniques are largely concerned with surveillance mechanisms and technological fixes, such as photographing, x-raying, and fingerprinting to meet visa requirements and border controls. In contrast, discipline allows the body to increase its economic productivity and at the same time weakens its forces ‘to assure political subjection’ (Lemke, 2011, 36). Discipline can encourage migration to become a waged worker, competition for productivity gains, or avoidance of health risks to remain productive. Discipline transforms the thinking, acting, and being of individuals through self-disciplining mechanisms and norms (Foucault, 1980), which can be considered prescriptions and truths, and as such can remain unquestioned. Discipline can also establish hierarchies and ‘a division between those considered normal and abnormal, suitable and capable, and the others’ (Lemke, 2011, 47), separating employable individuals from the unemployable.

While discipline may be associated with coercion, self-care is another technique more clearly associated to personal freedom and autonomous self-control capacities. With the exercise of self-care, individuals become subjects of their own actions. Self-care also enables social relations, as it allows a person to be in

relation to others, whether that would be living in a community or having employment relations. For example, migrant workers, aware of behavioural rules at the workplace and the relations between self and others, regulate themselves to continue being part of their own workplace community. Self-care also problematises social risks – such as unemployment and lack of development – transferring responsibility to individuals and collectives, and relying on their moral rational choices to solve them (Lemke, 2001). Self-care is also one of the main tenets of a neoliberal rationality.

Understanding neoliberalism as a political rationality allows examining how its strategies are articulated. Neoliberalism renders the social domain as economic by emphasising personal responsibility or self-care. In doing so, neoliberalism does not necessarily opposes collectivism, but it rather promotes self-reliant communities (Rose, 2000). Persons are not governed as citizens but as member of communities by intensifying their allegiance to them under common objectives, in this case, ‘enjoying development’. The driving principle for the neoliberal articulation of migration management is the maximisation of labour and money. Thus, in an epistemological break, neoliberalism shifts the object of economic analysis to the strategic programming of individuals’ activity. This means not considering the worker as the object of supply and demand in the form of labour power, but as an active economic subject whose work is an ‘economic conduct practiced, implemented, rationalized and calculated by the person who works’ (Foucault, 2008, 223). In the upcoming sections, the linkages between governments’ conduct of the economy to the conduct of individuals and their communities is brought to the foreground. Because practices are embedded in a particular rationality, identifying the kind of political knowledge underpinning them, becomes a valuable exercise.

1.3 Migration Management as the Governmentality of Mobility

Managing migration entails governing populations, regulating formal migration channels, defining policies, processes, and stakeholders and formalising their roles and responsibilities to avoid irregular migration. In contrast to other welfare forms, the neoliberal underpinnings of migration management aim to delegate public policy responsibilities to migrants to solve their own poverty or unemployment. Thus, migration management can be understood as the governmentality of mobility. Foucauldian scholars articulate migration management as a political rationality within neoliberal governmentality, as its effects are directed by employing discrete tools, disciplinary tactics and technologies (Kalm, 2010; Kunz, 2013). These range from ‘information campaigns and “pre-departure instruments” (such as language training and tests, marriage and health checks, or measures putting an end to migration such as “voluntary assisted return” or resettlement activities)’